

REMARKS

Claims 19-37 are pending in this application. Claims 28-36 stand withdrawn. By this Amendment, claim 19 is amended and claim 37 is added. No new matter is added. Support for amended claim 19 can be found, at least, at page 19 line 27 - page 20 line 3 of the specification, and support for claim 37 can be found, at least, in Fig. 1b.

Applicants appreciate the courtesies shown to Applicants' representative by Examiners Baldwin and Zimmerman in the December 19, 2007 personal interview. Applicants separate record of the substance of the interview is incorporated into the following remarks.

The Office Action rejects claims 19, 20, 22, 23 and 26 under 35 U.S.C. §102(a) over JP 2002-309922 to Shigeto and claims 19, 20, 22, 24 and 26 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over JP 04-301115 to Yu. The Office Action also rejects claim 21 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over either Shigeto or Yu. Finally, the Office Action rejects claims 19, 20 and 22-27 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over WO 00/48807 to Cutler in view of Yu. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

With regard to Shigeto, claim 19 recites that the tip of the protruding portion is substantially flat or moderately curved. By contrast, Shigeto discloses protruding portions having pointed tips. Therefore, as discussed during the December 19 interview, withdrawal of the rejection of claim 19 over Shigeto is respectfully requested.

With regard to Yu, claim 19 as amended now recites that the honeycomb structure has protruding plugging portions on both end faces. By contrast, Yu specifically shows in Fig. 1 a honeycomb with protruding portions only on one end face. See protruding portions 18, but plugging portions not protruding. Furthermore, Yu discloses that the purpose of its protruding portions is to provide heat dissipation effects, while in use in an exhaust system. As such, Yu only needs protruding plugs on its forward end. By contrast, the instant specification, on pages 19 and 20 discloses that, among it other purposes, the protruding plugs help prevent chipping

and cracking of the casing, by preventing the case from contacting any surface it is placed on. Therefore, because the honeycomb structure can be placed either end up on a floor, protruding plugs are beneficial on both ends. Therefore, Yu does not disclose this feature of claim 19.

Regarding claim 27, the Office Action alleges that Cutler discloses that the plugging material can be made of a two-part epoxy. The Office Action further states that the same type of epoxy is listed in paragraph [0012] of the instant specification, which describes what materials the plugging material can be made of. The Office Action therefore asserts that because Cutler discloses the same plugging material as the instant specification it inherently discloses that the porosity of the plugging material is smaller than any other portion of the plugged structure, because such a feature is inherent to the material.

However, as discussed during the December 19 interview, the materials disclosed in paragraph [0012] of the instant specification are not part of the final plugging material. Rather, paragraph [0012] only discloses materials that are introduced into the slurry. These materials are introduced to increase the viscosity of the slurry so that it can be efficiently poured into the honeycomb structure to form the plug. However, during the processing of the plugging materials, these materials are lost or burned off. See page 27 of the instant specification. Therefore, the final plugging material does not include these materials. Therefore, the Office Action's assertion regarding Cutler is inaccurate. As such, withdrawal of the rejection of claim 27 is respectfully requested.

Regarding claim 37, the claim recites that at least some of the plugging portions located in the central portion of the honeycomb do not protrude. As can be seen in both Yu and Shigeto the honeycomb structure shows plugging portions protruding everywhere from every cell having a plug. Accordingly, neither Shigeto nor Yu discloses a honeycomb in which at least some of the plugging portions and the central portion of one end face do not protrude.

For at least the above reasons, Shigeto, Yu and Cutler cannot reasonably be considered to teach or have suggested the combinations of the features recited in independent claim 19. Furthermore, claims 20-27 and 37 would also not have been suggested by the applied prior art references for at least their respective dependence on allowable claim 19, as well as for the separately patentable subject matter that each of these claims recites. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejections of claims 19-27 under 35 U.S.C. §§102 and 103(a) is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable consideration and prompt allowance of claims 19-27 and 37 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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